

## University of Arkansas, Fayetteville ScholarWorks@UARK

---

### Theses and Dissertations

---

12-2011

# Jurors' Ability to Judge the Reliability of Confessions and Denials: Effects of Camera Perspective During Interrogation

Lindsey Nicole Sweeney  
*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Law and Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Sweeney, Lindsey Nicole, "Jurors' Ability to Judge the Reliability of Confessions and Denials: Effects of Camera Perspective During Interrogation" (2011). *Theses and Dissertations*. 150.  
<http://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/150>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact [scholar@uark.edu](mailto:scholar@uark.edu).



**JURORS' ABILITY TO JUDGE THE RELIABILITY OF CONFESSIONS AND DENIALS:  
EFFECTS OF CAMERA PERSPECTIVE DURING INTERROGATION**

JURORS' ABILITY TO JUDGE THE RELIABILITY OF CONFESSIONS AND DENIALS:  
EFFECTS OF CAMERA PERSPECTIVE DURING INTERROGATION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Psychology

By

Lindsey Nicole Sweeney  
University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, 2008

December 2011  
University of Arkansas

## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research shows that some proportion of people interrogated confess, regardless of actual guilt. It has also been shown that the camera perspective from which an interrogation is videotaped influences later judgments of voluntariness and guilt, as well as sentencing recommendations. The present research extends the understanding of this phenomenon of false confessions and the camera perspective bias. Ecologically valid videotaped true/false confessions and denials were obtained in Experiment 1. The proportions of guilt participants and participants that confessed to cheating were found to be smaller in Experiment 1 than those in previous research. Participants in Experiment 2 viewed the videotapes from the first experiment from a suspect-focused, interrogator-focused, or equal-focused camera perspective and judged the suspects' guilt as well as made attributions of responsibility for the suspects' statements. Results from the second experiment did not show a camera perspective bias in judgments of guilt; however, camera perspective did influence the type and amount of attributions made. Implications of these findings are discussed.

This thesis is approved for recommendation  
to the Graduate Council.

Thesis Director:

---

Dr. James Lampinen

Thesis Committee:

---

Dr. William Levine

---

Dr. Scott Eidelman

## THESIS DUPLICATION RELEASE

I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas Libraries to duplicate this thesis when needed for research and/or scholarship.

Agreed \_\_\_\_\_  
*Lindsey Nicole Sweeney*

Refused \_\_\_\_\_  
*Lindsey Nicole Sweeney*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would not have been possible without funding from the Howell's Fund. Special thanks are due to my advisor, Dr. James M. Lampinen, who allowed me to pursue my own line of research in the law and psychology laboratory. I would not have been able to complete this thesis without the support and the opportunities provided to me by Dr. Lampinen. I would also like to thank Dr. William Levine and Dr. Scott Eidelman who served as my committee members. Dr. Levine and Dr. Eidelman provided me with encouragement, support, and more help than they realize during this process.

Additionally, I would like to thank Amber Culbertson-Faegre who has not only been a wonderful friend, but has read several drafts of this thesis and in general supported me throughout this process. I would also like to thank Christopher Peters who read multiple copies of this thesis and provided extremely helpful advice during the course of this project and my graduate career thus far. A sincere thank you must also be extended to William Blake Erickson who is always willing to help a friend in need. Also, thank you to all of my research assistants that worked on this long and difficult project.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my family for their encouragement and support in everything I do. My parents, Bradford and Julie Choate, have always pushed me to be the best person I can be and I would not be where I am today without them. My brother, Captain Justin Brent Choate, has always given me encouragement and inspiration to succeed in everything I do. My sister, Lauren Choate, is my best friend and has always been there for me through thick and thin. Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Joshua Sweeney, for his support and understanding during this long process. Thank you for always reminding me what the important things are in life.



## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Bradford Eugene Choate. Your hard work and dedication in life inspired me to get as much education as possible and to never settle for second best. You pushed me to do things I did not think I could do and I have always tried my hardest to make you proud. Thank you for inspiring me to be more than I ever thought I could be.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Documented Cases of False Confessions	1
III.	Empirical Evidence for the Existence of False Confessions	3
IV.	Why Innocent People Confess	5
	A.    Situational Factors	5
	B.    Dispositional Factors	7
V.	Judging the Veracity of Statements	9
VI.	Attributions of Behavior	11
VII.	Videotaping Interrogations	13
VIII.	Statement of the Problem	18
IX.	Experiment 1	19
	A.    Method	20
	1.    Participants	20
	2.    Materials	21
	3.    Design	22
	4.    Procedure	22
	B.    Results	25
	1.    Manipulation Check	25
	2.    Analyses	26
	C.    Discussion	26
X.	Experiment 2	27
	A.    Method	29
	1.    Participants	30
	2.    Materials	30
	3.    Design	31
	4.    Procedure	31
	B.    Results	32
	1.    Guilt Judgments	32
	2.    Attributions of Behavior	34
	C.    Discussion	37
XI.	General Discussion	37
	A.    Limitations and Future Directions	46
	B.    Conclusion	48
XII.	References	49
XIII.	Tables	53
	A.    Table 1: Overall Means and Standard Deviations for Judgments of Guilt $\times$ Confidence	53
	B.    Table 2: Overall Means and Standard Deviations for the Differences Between Dispositional and Situational Attributions	54
XIV.	Figures	55
	A.    Figure 1: Mean Judgments of Guilt $\times$ Confidence as a Function of Guilt and Gender of the Suspect	55

B.	Mean Judgments of Guilt $\times$ Confidence as a Function of Guilt and Statement	56
C.	Mean Judgments of Guilt $\times$ Confidence as a Function of Statement, Camera Perspective, and Gender of the Suspect	57
D.	Differences Between Dispositional and Situational Attributions as a Function of Gender of the Suspect and Guilt	58
E.	Differences Between Dispositional and Situational Attributions as a Function of Gender of the Suspect and Camera Perspective	59
F.	Differences Between Dispositional and Situational Attributions as a Function of Gender of the Suspect, Guilt, and Camera Perspective	60
XV.	Appendix A: Problem-Solving Worksheet	61

Research indicates that between 40% and 76% of suspects who are interrogated by the police confess (Gudjonsson, 2003). While most of these confessions are given by guilty individuals (i.e., true confessions), some are given by those who are innocent (i.e., false confessions). The exact prevalence of false confessions is currently unknown; however, to date there have been 273 convictions overturned due to DNA evidence in the United States history (Innocence Project, 2011), of which 66 of the convictions involved a defendant who falsely confessed to the crime. In fact, false confessions are currently considered to be one of the leading causes of wrongful convictions of innocent people (Klaver, Lee, & Rose, 2008). Although it may seem inconceivable that someone would confess to a crime they did not commit, there are several documented cases in which this happened. Furthermore, previous research has demonstrated that it is possible to obtain a false confession in a laboratory setting as well (e.g., Kassin & Keichel, 1996; Lassiter, Clark, Ware, Schmidt, & Geers, manuscript in preparation (as cited in Snyder, Lassiter, Lindberg & Pinegar, 2009); Russano, Meissner, Narchet, & Kassin, 2005).

False confessions are problematic because jurors are sometimes presented with these confessions and must decide whether or not the confession is valid. Whether jurors believe the confession is genuine likely depends on how they attribute the defendant's behavior during the confession (i.e., explain the causes of the suspect confessing). Jurors may see the confession as a reflection of an internal state of guilt or as a result of situational pressure to confess.

### **Documented Cases of False Confessions**

The phenomenon of false confessions can be investigated outside of the laboratory by examining real-world documented cases where someone confessed to committing a crime and was later proven innocent. There are hundreds of documented cases of false confessions

throughout history. For example, in January of 1998 Richard Tuite, a felon and a drifter diagnosed with schizophrenia, snuck into 12-year-old Stephanie Crowe's bedroom and stabbed her to death while her family slept. Tuite had been seen in the Crowe's neighborhood on the night of the murder asking around about a girl. Police questioned Tuite and confiscated his clothes, but released him due to a lack of evidence and because they did not think he was capable of getting into the Crowe's house without anyone knowing. Soon after the murder, Stephanie's 14-year-old brother, Michael Crowe, became a person of interest to police when he appeared to be distant and distracted after his sister's body was discovered (Leung, 2009). Michael confessed to the murder of his little sister after being interrogated for two days about the murder without his parents or a lawyer present. The interrogation was videotaped, documenting Michael making comments such as "I'm only saying this because it's what you want to hear" (Leung, 2009). Two of Michael's friends became suspects as well and were also interrogated for several hours. One of Michael's friends, Aaron Houser, confessed to the murder. Michael's second friend, Josh Treadway, did not confess but gave a "hypothetical" and incriminating account of the murder (Leung).

All three of the young boys later claimed they were coerced into confessing and recanted their statements. A judge later deemed Michael and Aaron's confessions to be coerced and threw the confessions out of evidence, as well as part of Josh's statements. Treadway's public defender discovered that not all of Tuite's clothes had been tested for DNA and demanded the testing be done. After six months of the boys being incarcerated, DNA testing linked Richard Tuite to Stephanie Crowe's blood and the charges against the three boys were dropped (Leung, 2009).

The false confession of Michael Crow is just one of numerous cases in which someone confessed to committing a crime they did not commit. For example, in 1947 more than 50 people confessed to the brutal torture, murder, and dismemberment of Elizabeth Short, the actress from the movie *Black Dahlia* (Kassin et al., 2010). Another example of such a situation can be found in the 1989 Central Park jogger case where five teenagers confessed to rape and murder and were convicted and sent to prison, only to be exonerated 13 years later by DNA evidence (Drizin & Leo, 2004). Probably one of the most baffling examples of a case involving false confessions is that of Henry Lee Lucas, who falsely confessed to hundreds of unsolved murders in Texas in 1980, making him the person to falsely confess to the most crimes in history (Kassin et al., 2010). All of these cases demonstrate that false confessions do occur in real life and that they can have serious repercussions.

### **Empirical Evidence for the Existence of False Confessions**

Kassin and Keichel (1996) designed the first and, until recently, only paradigm for eliciting false confessions in a laboratory setting. In their ‘alt’ key paradigm, participants typed letters on a keyboard (either at a slow or fast pace) as the experimenter read the letters out loud. Prior to the start of the session, participants were told that there was a problem with the computer program and if they hit the ‘alt’ key the computer would crash, resulting in all of the data for the experiment being lost. One minute into the experiment the computer “unexpectedly” crashed. Participants were all truly innocent and all initially denied hitting the ‘alt’ key. However, across conditions 69% of the participants confessed to hitting the forbidden key when interrogated, and signed a confession admitting to doing so. This study has been replicated and expanded upon multiple times (e.g., Forrest, Wadkins, & Larson, 2006; Horselenberg, Merckelbach & Josephs, 2003; Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation (as cited in Snyder et al., 2009); Redlich &

Goodman, 2003) and although the findings may be counterintuitive, they represent a reliable phenomenon.

Much of the research on confessions and interrogations is conducted in order to discover the best ways to elicit high rates of true confessions while minimizing the rates of false confessions (Russano et al., 2005). Kassin and Keichel's (1996) 'alt' key paradigm was a breakthrough in false confession research; however, the paradigm lacks ecological value due to the fact that all participants are innocent, therefore eliminating the possibility for participants to truly confess. In order to accurately understand when and why people falsely confess, one must be able to examine the ratio of true confessions to false confessions (Russano et al., 2005).

To overcome the limitations of the 'alt' key paradigm, Russano et al. (2005) developed a false confession paradigm that made it possible to study both true and false confessions in a more controlled environment. Participants (all male) were seated in a room with a female confederate to work on solving written problems. The participant and confederate were informed that they would be working on some problems together but that there were other problems they were required to work on independently. It was made clear which problems were to be worked on separately and which problems they should work on together. The experimenter then left the room for approximately 20 minutes. In the innocent condition, the participant and the confederate worked independently when instructed to do so. In the guilty condition, the confederate asked the participant for help on a problem that they were instructed to work on independently. In nearly all cases the actual participant provided the confederate with help on the problem they were instructed to work on independently. The experimenter, blind to which condition the participant was in, returned to the room, collected the responses, and again left the room. After a period of five minutes the experimenter returned and, regardless of the condition,

said that he/she noticed the answers to the independent questions were very similar and that he/she believed that the two had collaborated on their answers. The experimenter then separated the participant from the confederate and attempted to gain a written confession from the participant. Interrogation techniques and the offer of a “deal” were varied. Across experiments the rate of true confessions ranged from about 64% to 82% and from 17% to 25% for false confessions. Using minimization tactics (i.e., strategies minimizing the seriousness and the consequences of the crime) and offering leniency led to increased rates of both true and false confessions compared to using no tactic, offering only a deal, or using only minimization (Russano et al., 2005).

### **Why Innocent People Confess**

#### **Situational Factors**

Several police interrogation tactics are used to elicit a confession in applied settings; however, these tactics sometimes lead to eliciting a false confession. Kassin (1997) describes three types of false confessions: the voluntary confession, the coerced-compliant confession, and the coerced-internalized confession. A voluntary confession occurs in the absence of any obvious external pressure (e.g., to cover for one’s child). On the other hand, a coerced-compliant confession is when an individual confesses to the crime in order to escape a stressful situation, such as being interrogated for a long period of time. Finally, a coerced-internalized confession occurs when the suspect becomes convinced, at least for that moment, that he/she actually committed the crime. For example, if a suspect had an alcoholic blackout during the time of the crime they were accused of committing, and truly could not remember where they were or what they did, the interrogator may be able to convince the suspect they committed the crime and simply do not remember doing so.



Eight interrogation tactics have been identified that seem to routinely appear in cases of coerced-internalized confessions (Ofshe, 1989). Four of these tactics appear to be present in all cases of coerced-internalized confessions: the interrogator repeatedly states their certainty in the suspect's guilt; isolates the suspect from information and social support that undermines the interrogator's position; utilizes lengthy interrogations with high emotional intensity; and develops a post-hoc explanation to account for why the suspect may not remember committing the crime. Additionally, four more tactics used during interrogations are routinely seen in some, but not all, cases of coerced-internalized confessions. These tactics include: repeatedly claiming the authorities have scientific evidence that proves the suspect's guilt; repeatedly bringing up any previous criminal records to decrease their confidence about correctly recalling the crime; simply demanding the suspect accept the post-hoc explanation; and use of tactics designed to induce fear that if the suspect does not confess they will receive the most severe of the possible punishments for the crime.

An additional and important situational factor that affects whether a suspect confesses is the environment in which they are being interrogated. In most interrogations an authority figure claims to have insight and experience about what happened during the crime, and why the suspect may have committed the crime (Kassin, 1997). Furthermore, interrogations are usually in private, small rooms with no windows and are socially isolated where the suspect cannot get external cues about the reality of the situation (Kassin, 1997).

Some interrogators employ tactics known as minimization and maximization to obtain a confession (Kassin, 2008). During minimization, the interrogator reduces the seriousness of the crime by expressing sympathy for the suspect and offering moral justification for them committing the crime. For example, an interrogator may say they understand why the suspect

would murder a child rapist, no one would think they were a bad person, and in fact the world is better off with one less child rapist. Using minimization tactics often leads the suspect to confess, believing they will receive some sort of leniency despite no explicit promises from the interrogator (Kassin & McNall, 1991). Russano et al. (2005) found that using minimization tactics not only increased true confessions from guilty participants but it also increased false confessions from innocent participants, which suggests this tactic may not be appropriate.

Maximization tactics include things like presenting false evidence, using intimidation, and exaggerating the seriousness of the charge (Kassin, 2008). Kassin and Keichel (1996) demonstrated how using maximization tactics (in this case presentation of a false witness) could produce false confessions. Participants in the 'alt' key paradigm typed at a slow or fast pace. After the computer crashed, the experimenter accused the participant of pressing the forbidden key, and attempted to obtain a confession. For some participants, a confederate told the experimenter that she saw the participant hit the 'alt' key. It was found that in the fast pace/witness condition (maximization) participants signed a written confession 100% of the time.

High rates of false confessions were found in another study when false evidence from an authority figure was presented and an immediate negative consequence of monetary loss was added (Horselenberg, Merckelbach, & Josephs, 2003). The results from these studies suggest that the social context in which a suspect is questioned can play a large role in whether or not they decide to confess.

### **Dispositional Factors**

Internal factors may also help account for some false confessions. For example, Drizin and Leo (2004) found that juveniles account for a disproportionate percent of people who

confess. Additionally, more than 90% of juveniles the police intend to question waive their Miranda rights (Miranda v. Arizona, 1966) to remain silent and contact an attorney (Kassin, 2008). In another study, Redlich and Goodman (2003) found that younger participants (ages 12-13 and 15-16) were more likely to sign a false confession than college students, with the 15 and 16 year olds most influenced when false evidence was presented. This study also demonstrated that participants who gave in to leading questions were more likely to falsely confess.

Kassin (1991) argued that memory is malleable by virtue of youth, naiveté, low intelligence, stress/fatigue (e.g., length of detention), and/or substance use, thus increasing the risk of falsely confessing. Kassin reported that those in a state of uncertainty are likely to falsely confess, create additional details consistent with their new “memory”, and internalize the confession. It is sometimes the case that a confession is the only evidence against a defendant. Therefore, in the absence of corroborating evidence, a confession may be taken as sufficient to convict the person.

Furthermore, individual differences, such as self-esteem, self-confidence, and susceptibility to guilt, may interact with contextual factors (e.g., a closed social interaction) and interpersonal pressure (e.g., from an interrogator), leading some individuals to make false confessions (Gudjonsson, 1992). For example, Forrest, Wadkins, and Larson (2006) used the ‘alt’ key paradigm to investigate the roles of gender, stress, and personality on false confessions. Females were more likely to falsely confess and internalize than males. However, males internalized more in stressful (vs. non-stressful) conditions. Additionally, false confessions were related to increased susceptibility to leading questions and internalization was related to personality variables such as external locus of control, anxiety, and authoritarianism (Klaver, 2008).

### **Judging the Veracity of Statements**

Determining the validity of a confession becomes an issue for the courts when it comes to jurors and judges, because they must assign the appropriate weight to a confession (Lassiter, Diamond, Schmidt & Elek, 2007). In Jackson v. Denno (1964) the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a criminal defendant has the right to a pretrial hearing to determine whether the confession they gave was voluntary. If the judge decides the confession was in fact voluntary it is then introduced at trial. Even if the confession is admitted for the jury to hear, the defendant may still claim that the confession was coerced. In this case the jury must decide whether they believe the confession was voluntary.

Additionally, it is sometimes the case that a confession is ruled inadmissible during the pretrial hearing but is improperly mentioned to the jury (e.g., statements from a police officer testifying); (Henkel, 2008). If this were to happen the judge would likely instruct the jury to disregard the information about the defendant's confession, but it is sometimes the case that the judge fails to explain the reason the confession was found to be inadmissible (Kassin & Sukel, 1997). Research has shown that mock jurors are often unable to disregard such confession evidence when deciding on a verdict, regardless of specific instructions to do so (Kassin & Wrightsman, 1980). In fact, the simple presence of a confession can increase the rate of guilty verdicts (Kassin & Sukel, 1997). Because disregarding confession evidence is not a simple task, it is not surprising that Drizin and Leo (2004) found that juries convicted 81% of people who falsely confessed to a crime and later plead not guilty at trial.

It is not a simple task to distinguish truth from deception. When jurors decide whether a confession is true or false they take on this difficult task. Previous research has produced mixed findings on deception detection accuracy. Some research suggests that some people are able to

accurately detect deception above chance (e.g., Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991); however, the majority of the literature suggests that this is not the case (for a review, see Vrij, 2000). In one study, members of law enforcement, psychiatrists, special interest groups, and college students viewed a video of a woman and attempted to determine whether she was lying or telling the truth (Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991). All participants watched a video of the woman describing positive feelings about a "nature" video she was watching; however, for half the participants this description was given while the woman was actually watching a gruesome video. Only law enforcement personnel were able to accurately detect when the woman was lying above chance levels and over half of them were more than 70% accurate.

When a confession goes before a jury it is laypersons who must be able to accurately determine the veracity of the confession. In line with Ekman and O'Sullivan's (1991) findings, another study by Kassin, Meissner, and Norwick (2005) demonstrated that laypeople, in general, are unable to detect deception above chance levels. Kassin et al. (2005) used videotapes of male prison inmates making true confessions about their crimes and making false confessions for crimes they did not commit. Later, police investigators and laypeople judged the veracity of the confessions, producing an overall accuracy rate of 54%, which did not differ significantly from chance.

When it comes to judging the veracity of a person's statements, people tend to judge statements as truthful irrespective of actual statement veracity (Levine, Park, & McCornack, 1999). In tasks where participants judge others' deception, the tendency to judge statements as truthful is associated with increased accuracy (Levine et al., 1999). For example, Vrij (2000) conducted a review of lay observers' deception detection accuracy and found that 67% of

truthful statements were accurately identified, whereas only 44% of deceptive statements were accurately identified.

Two explanations have been offered to account for this truth bias. First, a form of the availability heuristic posits that because people encounter more truthful messages on a day-to-day basis, they are more likely to assume messages are truthful in general (O'Sullivan, Ekman, & Friesen, 1988). Second, it is possible this truth bias is a result of the difficulties of cognitive processing (McCornack, 1997). Previous research has demonstrated that both true and false information is initially represented as truthful, and information deemed false must be carefully re-assessed and documented as false (Gilbert, Krull, & Malone, 1990). Due to the difficulty in re-analyzing this incoming information, errors sometimes occur, leading observers to perceive false statements as truthful statements (Gilbert et al., 1990). These previous findings demonstrate how damning confession evidence can be in criminal trials.

### **Attributions of Behavior**

Whether jurors believe a confession is authentic likely depends on how they attribute the defendant's behavior during the confession. Jurors may see the confession as a reflection of an internal state of guilt or as a result of situational pressure to confess. Previous research has demonstrated that attributions of responsibility can be influenced by which person involved in the interaction is made more salient, a phenomenon known as the illusory causation (e.g., Taylor & Fiske, 1975; McArthur & Ginsberg, 1981). Taylor and Fiske (1975) conducted the first systematic demonstration of illusory causation in the social domain by having observers view an informal conversation between two people. The salience of each person was manipulated by where they sat in the room, such that they faced the observer or did not face the observer. It was

found that observers attributed greater causality to whichever person the observer happened to be facing.

If attributions of responsibility are greatly influenced by what is made more salient, manipulating salience should affect how behavior is interpreted. Storms (1973) had two actors engage in a short “get to know one another” conversation, while two observers watched. The first two conditions (no video replay and video replay of the original orientation) demonstrated that actors made more situational attributions than observers did. However, when actors were shown videotapes of themselves from an observer’s perspective, actors made more dispositional (i.e., internal) attributions than observers did. These findings suggest that self-observation increases an individual’s dispositional attributions of their behavior, and that they interpret their behavior more in line with observers’ interpretations.

Additionally, previous research has demonstrated the fundamental attribution error; that is, people tend to underestimate the role of situational factors and overestimate dispositional factors that may cause an actor’s outcomes and actions (Ross, 1977). Ross had one participant generate difficult general knowledge questions for a quiz game for another participant to answer, based on their personal knowledge. After the game participants rated their general knowledge and their partner’s general knowledge compared to an average Stanford University student. It was found that both the questioners and the answerers rated the questioners as superior to the answerers. In a second study the same bias was found as in the first study when uninvolved observers watched a close simulation of the interaction that went on in the first experiment. However, this bias was stronger for the answerers and uninvolved observers than for the questioners.

The fundamental attribution error has been demonstrated in several studies across multiple domains. For example, Jones and Harris (1967) found listeners assumed that speakers' pro-Castro comments reflected their personal opinions, despite knowing the speaker was obeying the instructions from the experimenter in a "no-choice" condition. In another study, participants who personally engaged in an exact reenactment of the classic Milgram (1963) study consistently underestimated how much electric shock participants in the original study would administer (Bierbrauer, 1973). Participants attributed the original participants' obedience to personal dispositions as opposed the situational influences like the ones they had just experienced themselves. Accordingly, social roles appear to be an important situational force that can bias the inferences observers make about actors based on these performances.

Both illusory causation and the fundamental attribution error have important implications when it comes to making accurate social judgments outside the laboratory as well. For example, when a suspect is taken into police custody and questioned, the interrogator has more control over the style, content, and duration of the interrogation than the suspect. This control facilitates the interrogator's display of knowledge, skill, and insight. In any interpersonal encounter, each individual's social role can affect a perceiver's social judgments about the individual. In order to make accurate social judgments one must be able to recognize, and correct for, the influences that an individual's social role can have on such judgments (Ross, 1977; Gilbert et al., 1990). Accordingly, it is likely that evaluations of the validity of confessions are influenced by whoever is made more salient during the interrogation. That is, during a videotaped interrogation, whether the camera is focused on the suspect, interrogator, or both, is likely to affect one's perception of the validity of the confession.

### **Videotaping Interrogations**



Documentation of custodial interrogations is beginning to expand beyond written reports and audiotaped recordings to videotaped recordings of the interrogations; however, this is not always the case. Videotaping an interrogation is not mandatory in all legal arenas and is actually discouraged in some (Geller, 1993). Therefore, in these cases, confession evidence is presented in the form of a written confession with little documentation of *how* the confession was obtained (Lassiter, Munhall, Geers, Weiland, & Handley, 2001).

In the United States, videotaped interrogations most often take place only for serious crimes such as felony cases or cases of violence. Advocates of videotaping interrogations argue that doing so will reduce coercive tactics used by police, as well as provide a complete and well-documented record of the interrogation (Geller, 1993). Others (Lassiter et al., 2001) argue that videotaping confessions and interrogations allows judges and jurors to make objective and accurate decisions as to the validity of the confession.

It is commonly thought that having an interrogation and confession on videotape would allow for more accurate evaluations of the validity of the confession (Leo & Ofshe, 1998). However, the ability to distinguish a false confession from a true confession may depend partly on how the videotaped confession is presented to the jury.

When an interrogation is videotaped, the camera is usually focused on the suspect, likely in order to directly hear and see what the suspect is doing to assess the veracity of the statement (Kassin, 1997). However, this approach excludes many of the situational influences that may affect the validity of a confession. This becomes an issue because judgments of whether a suspect voluntarily confessed can be influenced by the angle in which the confession is videotaped (Lassiter et al., 2001).

Lassiter and Irvine (1986) demonstrated the phenomenon of illusory causation by showing participants videotaped interrogations where either the suspect or the interrogator was the focus of the camera. Participants rated voluntariness of confessions highest in the suspect-focused perspective and lowest in the interrogator-focused perspective. Other studies have found the camera perspective to influence both judgments of guilt and sentencing recommendations as well (Lassiter et al., 2002; Lassiter, Beers, Geers & Munhall, 2003; Lassiter, Diamond, Schmidt & Elek, 2007).

Lassiter et al. (2003) had participants view the videotaped interrogation-confession of Peter Reilly, a man who was wrongfully convicted for the manslaughter of his mother based on his coerced confession. Later it was proven that Reilly could not have committed the crime and his conviction was overturned. After viewing the videotaped interrogation, participants were more accurate in judging Reilly's innocence and in judging that his confession was coerced when they viewed the interrogator-focused version, compared to the suspect-focused or equal-focused (i.e., profile view of both the suspect and interrogator from the waist up) versions. Therefore, it appears that participants were able to accurately judge the confession when the situational factors surrounding the confession were made salient.

With these findings in mind, researchers have begun investigating whether there is a way to videotape interrogations that leads to more accurate detection of deception and falsity in confessions. For example, Snyder et al. (2009) proposed that there might be a better way to videotape interrogations that eliminates the camera perspective bias. Although the equal-focus camera perspective produces relatively unbiased evaluations, it does not allow for a full-face view of the suspect, which some find helpful when making judgments about the voluntariness and validity of a confession. Snyder et al. examined an alternative method of videotaping

interrogations by splicing the suspect-focused and interrogator-focused perspective and created a dual-camera perspective. For their dual-camera perspective the authors used a split screen video where a full-face view of the suspect and a full-face view of the interrogator was presented, thus creating an equal-focus situation. The dual-camera perspective produced unbiased evaluations of guilt and therefore the authors suggest it may be a viable alternative to the equal-focus perspective. However, in a follow up study, Snyder et al. found that the dual-camera perspective was no better than the suspect-focused perspective with regard to distinguishing between true and false confessions. How the camera perspective impacts judgments of the validity of a confession during an interrogation had yet to be fully answered.

Lassiter et al. (manuscript in preparation, as cited in Snyder et al., 2009) provided a partial answer to how the perspective of an interrogation-confession can affect participants' accuracy when distinguishing between true and false confessions. In this study, actual true and false confessions were obtained using a modified version of Kassin and Keichel's (1996) 'alt' key paradigm. A participant and a confederate worked together on a computer task that appeared to crash during the experiment. The computer "crash" was either "caused" by the participant (all males) or by the confederate (all females) hitting the 'alt' key. In one condition the female confederate urged the male participant to hit the specified key, in the other condition she pleaded with him not to turn her in for hitting the key because she was scared of it affecting whether she received a research position with the faculty member associated with the experiment.

Confessions were videotaped in a suspect-focused, interrogator-focused, or equal-focused manner, as well as documented via audiotape and transcription. Two true and two false confessions were shown to a new group of participants who rated the truthfulness of the confessions. Participants' truthfulness ratings of the two false confessions were subtracted from

their ratings of the two true confessions. It was found that in the interrogator-focused condition participants had greater accuracy than the equal-focused condition, which was followed by the suspect-focused condition.

The findings provided by Lassiter et al. (manuscript in preparation, as cited in Snyder et al., 2009) currently tell us the most about how the camera perspective affects judgments of the validity of confessions. That being said, several considerations must be made when evaluating these findings. First, the use of all male participants and all female confederates reduces the ability to generalize the authors' findings to real world confessions. The gender difference between the participant and the confederate may have impacted the participant's willingness to confess. It is possible that the male participants found it easier to build rapport with the female confederates, compared to if the confederates had been male. The fact that the female confederates either urged the male participants to hit the forbidden key or pleaded with him not to turn her in for doing so likely contributed to whether or not the participant confessed and to how convincing the confession was. In the cases where the confederates urged the participants to press the key, participants may have felt less guilty about helping a female, compared to if a male asked. In the condition where the confederates begged the participants not to turn her in for the fear of not getting her desired job position, the participant may have conformed to the stereotypical idea that men should protect women (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). In either case, the role of gender becomes a factor that is not always a component of a confession.

Additionally, the 'alt' key paradigm that was used in this study has been thought to be of low salience (e.g., Horselenberg et al., 2003; Russano et al., 2005). In the 'alt' key paradigm participants are accused of causing the computer to crash by hitting the 'alt' key, a highly plausible action as the 'alt' key is close to the main keys used when typing. Therefore, it is very

possible that participants confessed to hitting the 'alt' key simply due to the fact that they could have accidentally hit it and not noticed. Furthermore, the motivation for falsely confessing in this study was to cover for another person in order to help them avoid getting in trouble. That is, participants who falsely confessed were not trying to avoid blame; rather, they were trying to convince the interrogator that they were guilty. In real life cases voluntary false confessions do occur but are rare. In a typical case the suspect is initially resistant and will only confess after the interrogator pressures them to do so (Kassin, 1997).

### **Statement of Problem**

With 273 felony convictions overturned in United States history due to DNA evidence, understanding why people confess to crimes they did not commit, and whether the perspective the confession is videotaped from affects judgments of these confessions as true or false, is necessary to maintain the integrity of the criminal justice system. Specifically, a number of researchers have demonstrated that a proportion of those who confess to committing a crime falsely confess, and the conditions under which people falsely confess have been investigated (e.g., Kassin & Keichel, 1996; Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation (cited in Snyder et al., 2009); Russano et al., 2005). However, the findings from previous research as to the proportion of people that falsely confess vary. This variation may be due to differences in procedure as well as the limitations previously mentioned, both of which may limit the generalizability of the results.

Furthermore, past research has shown that people are generally poor at distinguishing videotaped true from false confessions (e.g., Kassin, Meissner, & Norwick, 2005). However, these chance-level accuracy rates may be due to videotaped confessions typically being suspect-focused. Previous research on the camera perspective bias has been very informative, but the

phenomenon is not yet fully understood. Additionally, Experiment 2 is the first research to address accuracy in distinguishing true from false denials.

Previous findings make up a solid base for confession research to continue, and they have important implications for social psychology and the criminal justice system. It is important to research false confessions and the camera perspective bias further, in order to apply the findings to real world confession evidence and juror decision-making. The current studies were conducted to gain a better understanding of the proportion of people who confess to and who deny cheating, as well as to test the effect of camera perspective on the accuracy with which people can judge the guilt of suspects who confess and deny.

### **Experiment 1**

Prior research suggests that when accused of a crime some proportion of guilty participants will confess and some proportion of innocent participants will confess as well (e.g., Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation (as cited in Snyder et al., 2009); Russano et al., 2005). Experiment 1 sought to investigate these proportions as well as the proportion of guilty participants who deny committing the crime they are accused of and the proportion of innocent participants who deny committing that crime.

Experiment 1 was designed to eliminate limitations in the existing research on confessions and interrogations in four important ways. First, in order to investigate whether the gender of the confederate has an impact on confession rates, male confederates were used in the current study, whereas all female confederates were used in Russano et al. (2005) and Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation (as cited in Snyder et al., 2009). Although the use of both male and female confederates would have been ideal, due to personnel limitations this was not possible. Second, instead of covering for another person's indiscretions, participants were always

accused of cheating themselves. Third, the consequences of confessing were made salient, as would be the case in real world settings. That is, cheating is considered academic dishonesty and could result in a failing course grade and/or expulsion from the university. Lastly, instead of being unsure of whether they committed the crime, as in the 'alt' key paradigm (Kassin & Keichel, 1996), participants knew whether or not they cheated. Specifically, it was predicted that confession rates and number of guilty participants would be smaller than in previous findings due to: participants being accused of the crime instead of covering for another person; being accused of a crime that they know whether they committed it or not; having some consequence for cheating made salient; and using male confederates and male interrogators.

## **Method**

**Participants.** Fifty (36 female) undergraduate psychology students from the University of Arkansas participated to obtain research credit for their General Psychology course. Data from four of the 50 participants (8%) were excluded from analysis, three who revealed they were aware of the true purpose of the experiment before or during participation and one who became distressed during the experiment, which resulted in the immediate termination of the session. All demographic data and analyses are based on the remaining 46 participants (32 female). Thirty-two participants were female and the mean age of participants was 19.02 ( $SD = 1.50$ , Range = 18 to 25). Two participants self-identified as African American, two as Native American or Alaskan Native, 35 as Caucasian, two as Hispanic, four as Asian or Pacific Islander, and one participant chose not to indicate their race or ethnicity. Because one of the main purposes of Experiment 1 was to collect materials for Experiment 2, when all videotaped confessions/denials had been collected except for the last one, a female false confession, only Caucasian females

between the ages of 18 and 24 were given the opportunity to participate in order to increase the likelihood of obtaining a female false confession.

**Materials.** At the beginning of the experiment participants signed a statement of consent to participate and provided demographic information (i.e., gender, age, race or ethnicity, and year in college).

A problem-solving worksheet, similar to Scattergories, was administered in which participants formed a word beginning with an indicated letter that matched a given clue (see Appendix A). Participants were informed their answers had to be real places, names, or things. For example, using the letter ‘A’ as the first letter in a boys name could result in an answer of ‘Adam.’

Three Sony Mobile HD Snap Cameras (digital video cameras) were hidden from sight, in order to avoid influencing the participants’ responses during the interrogation, to videotape the interrogations for use in future experiments. The interrogations were videotaped from three different perspectives. In the suspect-focused perspective, the camera was hidden behind the interrogator and was angled downward focusing on the suspect for the entire interrogation. In the interrogator-focused perspective, the camera was hidden behind and to the right of the suspect and focused on the interrogator during the course of the interrogation. Finally, in the equal-focused perspective, the camera was hidden to the side of the suspect and the interrogator and showed a profile shot that equally displayed the interrogator and the suspect during the course of the interrogation.

At the conclusion of the experiment participants signed a statement of debriefing and a statement of release to use the videotapes of the interrogations in future studies.



**Design.** Half of the participants were randomly assigned to the *guilty* condition, where the confederate initiated cheating by asking the participant for help on a problem-solving task they were told to work on individually. The other half of the participants were assigned to the *innocent* condition, where the confederate did not elicit help from the participant on the problem-solving task they were to work on individually. Whether the participant signed a written confession to cheating was the primary dependent variable.

**Procedure.** Participants were run one at a time. When participants arrived they sat in the experimental waiting area with the confederate. At the start of the study the experimenter retrieved both the participant and the confederate at the same time and led them to the experiment room. The experimenter made eye contact with the participant and casually gestured to a seat furthest from the door (this was to make it more plausible that the experimenter would later have the confederate leave the room first). In line with the Russano et al. (2005) protocol, the participant and confederate were told that the experiment was about decision-making and problem-solving, and that the researchers were interested in whether individuals or teams make better decisions and are better problem-solvers. The pair then signed a statement of consent to participate.

The participant and confederate were informed that the researchers were specifically interested in the types of problems best solved by individuals and by teams. The two were then told that because most problem-solving relationships in the real world do not involve two strangers they would be given about five minutes to get to know one another. Rapport building was necessary in order to increase the likelihood that some participants would cheat.

When the experimenter returned, participants were told that they would be solving four different sets of problems, similar to Scattegories, in which they were to use the indicated letter

to form words that fit the given clue and began with the indicated letter. Each problem was clearly marked as to whether they were to work together or independently. Participants were told to start by completing the first individual problem, and that although their problems were identical, it was very important to work separately on both of the individual problems.

Additionally, the participant and confederate were told to move on to the team problem only after they had both completed the individual problem and this pattern should remain the same until the two individual and two team problems were solved. After the experimenter explained that each problem should take no longer than five minutes, and that they should try their hardest come up with an answer for each problem, the experimenter left the room for 20 minutes.

For participants in the guilty condition, after the confederate was certain the participant had written down an answer for ‘something terrifying’ that begins with the letter ‘P’ on the last individual section, the confederate said, “I can’t get the answer for ‘something terrifying,’ what did you get?” If the participant did not give the confederate an answer, the confederate did not ask a second time. For participants in the innocent condition, the confederate did not make a request for the other participant to cheat. However, if participants in the innocent condition initiated cheating on their own, they were classified as guilty. Therefore, participants who gave the confederate at least one answer during the individual sections or asked for at least one answer during the individual sections were considered to have cheated, thus were classified as *guilty*. Participants who did not give the confederate any answers during the individual sections and did not ask for answers during the individual sections were considered not to have cheated, thus were classified as *innocent*.

After the 20-minute problem-solving period, the experimenter returned to the room, collected the answer sheets, and gave the participant and confederate a form to fill out their

demographic information. The experimenter stated that he was going to score the sheets, and left again for five minutes.

Blind to the condition, the experimenter returned to the room and stated, “It looks like we may have a problem. Um, I think I’ll speak with each of you separately. [Confederate], why don’t you come with me? [Participant], I’ll be back in just a minute” (Russano et al., 2005). The confederate was taken out of the room for five minutes, leaving the participant alone. After the five-minute period the experimenter returned and led the participant to a small windowless room equipped with three hidden cameras.

The experimenter then conducted an interrogation and attempted to get the participant to confess to the crime of cheating on the individual problems and sign a written confession. The interrogation simulated an average interrogation, where the interrogator pushed for a confession but did not physically or psychologically harm the suspect. The experimenter stated that he had just spoken with the confederate and there did seem to be a problem, it appeared the two had worked together on the individual sections and if that were the case they not only broke the rules of the experiment but also compromised the integrity of the study.

Participants were told that the experimenter had contacted their professor who was “very upset” about the situation. The experimenter then stated he was not sure whom his professor might notify about the situation and that his professor may consider the situation to be a case of cheating. The experimenter told the participant that he needed to document what happened and took out a piece of notebook paper and wrote, “I shared answers on the individual problems.” The experimenter handed the written confession to the participant and said, “I need you to sign this to document what happened. My professor may want to talk with you about it later.” If the participant refused to sign the written confession the experimenter made three more statements

maximizing the participant's involvement in the cheating (e.g., "I've run this experiment a dozen times and no one has had identical answers like you two did"), followed by four statements minimizing the participant's involvement (e.g., "I'm sure you were just trying to be helpful, I probably would have done the same thing if I were in your shoes"), all of which prompted the participant to confess.

If at any of the eight prompts to confess the participant confessed to cheating and signed the confession written by the experimenter, the participant was asked to explain in detail how the cheating transpired. If the participant still denied cheating after all eight prompts to confess the experimenter then simply asked them one last time to sign the confession. The experimenter then left the room, with or without the written confession. In either case, the experimenter simply stated, "I'll be right back."

When the experimenter returned, a one on one funnel debriefing took place as a manipulation check (see below). Participants were then asked to sign a debriefing form and a release allowing the researchers to use the videotapes of their interrogation in future studies. At the conclusion of the experiment participants partook in a brief positive mood induction session involving three components. Participants listened to a positive upbeat song (The Who's "The Blue, Red and Gray") while closing their eyes and thinking about a time in their life when they felt most happy and at peace. Finally, participants were given a small unexpected gift (a chocolate chip cookie). Participants were then thanked for their time and given credit for participating.

## **Results**

**Manipulation check.** Because of the general public's recent interest in confessions and interrogations, it is possible that some participants could have become aware of the true purpose

of the experiment sometime before or during the interrogation. Thus, a manipulation check was completed to screen out participants that were aware of the purpose of the study. At the conclusion of the experiment, all participants underwent a funnel debriefing that gradually revealed the true purpose of the study in order to allow the experimenter to judge if the participant appeared to have been aware of the purpose of the study.

Participants were asked if they had any questions about the experiment, what they thought about the experiment, and what they thought was the purpose of the experiment. Participants were then asked if anything about the experiment seemed odd or unusual to them and whether it felt like the experimenter was trying to “pull the wool over their eyes” at any point during the experiment. Finally, participants were asked whether they thought it was possible for a person to confess to a crime they did not commit. The experimenter then explained the true purpose of the experiment and the reasons for conducting it. If at any time during the debriefing a participant indicated that he or she knew the true purpose of the experiment prior to or during the experiment, they were excluded from analysis (which was the case for three participants).

**Analyses.** Results showed that 47.80% of participants were guilty of cheating. Additionally, it was found that 58.70% of participants confessed to cheating. Of the confessions given, 41.30% were true confessions and 17.40% were false confessions. Additionally, of the 41.30% of participants that denied cheating, 36.96% were true denials and 4.35% were false denials.

## **Discussion**

Experiment 1 was conducted in order to determine the proportion of participants that would confess to cheating, or deny cheating, when accused. Previous research has demonstrated

that, depending on the exact manipulation, participants who are interrogated will confess between of the time (e.g., Kassin & Kiechel, 1996; Forrest et al., 2002; Horselenberg et al., 2003; Redlich & Goodman, 2003). It has also been found that, depending on the exact manipulation, almost all participants that engaged in a cheating paradigm similar to the one used in Experiment 1 cheated (Russano et al., 2005).

The results from Experiment 1 support the first hypothesis that both confession rates and the number of guilty participants would be lower than in most of the previous research on confessions and interrogations. This discrepancy in results is likely due to differences in methodologies. Specifically, the lower confession rate found in the current study was likely due to participants being accused of cheating themselves and not covering for someone else, knowing for a fact whether they had cheated instead of being accused of a highly plausible and possibly accidental act of hitting a computer key, consequences for cheating being explicitly stated, and using male confederates and interrogators. Furthermore, the smaller number of guilty participants may have been due to using male confederates, simply because male participants may have felt less obligated or been less willing to help a male versus a female confederate (Eagly & Crowley, 1986).

Experiment 1 contributed to the evidence that it is possible to obtain false confessions under different, more ecologically valid conditions. However, Experiment 1 does not speak to how potential jurors view these more ecologically valid confessions and denials. Therefore, Experiment 2 was conducted in order to determine the effects of camera perspective on judgments of guilt and attributions of responsibility using ecologically valid videotaped confessions and interrogations.

## **Experiment 2**

Existing research has demonstrated that the camera perspective from which a confession is videotaped affects whether or not the confession is seen as voluntary (e.g., Lassiter & Irvine, 1986), as well as both judgments of guilt and sentencing recommendations (e.g., Snyder et al., 2009; Lassiter et al., 2002; Lassiter et al., 2003; Lassiter et al., 2007). Lassiter et al. (manuscript in preparation, as cited in Snyder et al., 2009) provided a partial answer to how the perspective in which the confession is videotaped influences the ability to accurately distinguish between true and false confessions. However, the videotaped interrogations used in previous research may have affected the way the confessions were judged, thus bringing into question the generalizability of the results.

In Experiment 2, the videotaped interrogations from Experiment 1, where experimenters (hereafter referred to as interrogators) accused participants (hereafter referred to as suspects) of cheating were used as stimulus material. Because the interrogations from Experiment 1 were more ecologically valid than some used in previous studies, more appropriate conclusions can be drawn as to the effects of camera perspective on the accuracy of true and false confessions. Additionally, these same videotapes can speak to the same aspects of camera perspective on accuracy for videotaped true and false denials. To the author's knowledge, the present study is the first to investigate whether observers are able to identify true and false denials.

Experiment 2 addressed three important questions regarding videotaped interrogations. First, can people accurately distinguish between true and false confessions? Second, when a suspect denies committing a crime, can people accurately distinguish a true from false denial? Lastly, what effect does camera perspective have on judgments of guilt and attributions of responsibility? Specifically, four hypotheses were addressed concerning videotaped confessions and denials.

- Hypothesis 1: Participants would not be able to accurately distinguish between true denials and false denials, in line with previous research showing that accuracy in distinguishing between true and false confessions is generally around chance (e.g., Kassin et al., 2005; Bradford et al., 2008).
- Hypothesis 2: Suspects who confess would be judged as more guilty than those who deny cheating, and those who deny cheating would be judged as more innocent than those who confessed due to the truth bias (e.g., Levine, Sun Park, & McCornack, 1999;).
- Hypothesis 3: Accuracy in judgments of guilt would be greatest in the interrogator-focused condition followed by the equal-focused condition, and poorest in the suspect-focused condition. This pattern of accuracy would likely be due to situational factors being available (Lassiter & Irvine, 1986; Lassiter et al., 2003; Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation, as cited in Snyder et al., 2009).
- Hypothesis 4: Participants would be more likely to make dispositional attributions of responsibility in the suspect-focused condition, both dispositional and situational attributions in the equal-focused condition, and situational attributions in the interrogator-focused condition due to illusory causation (Ross, 1977). However, overall dispositional attributions would be more common than situational attributions due the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977; Gilbert et al., 1990).

## **Method**



**Participants.** One hundred and seventy-eight undergraduate psychology students from the University of Arkansas participated for research credit in their General Psychology course. Twelve of the 178 participants (6.74%) failed to complete the experiment, nine due to computer malfunction, and three who were unable to complete the experiment in the allotted session time of one hour. All demographic data and analyses for guilt judgments are based on the remaining 166 (112 female) participants. Participants' age was determined by participants pressing a number one through eight on the keyboard indicating their age as either 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, or 25+ years old; the median age was 19-years-old. Eight participants self-identified as African American, two as Native American or Alaskan Native, 137 as Caucasian, nine as Hispanic, six as Asian or Pacific Islander, and four as biracial.

**Materials.** Eight videotaped interrogations from Experiment 1 were selected to be used in Experiment 2 based on several criteria. First, one male and one female true confession, false confession, true denial, and false denial were needed for Experiment 2. In order to keep the demographic information about the suspects consistent across videos, all suspects were to be Caucasian and between the ages of 18 and 24. In the cases where there was more than one videotaped interrogation that fit the required criteria, videos were chosen based on the quality of the video. Due to the nature of the cameras being hidden some videos contained obstructions that blocked part of the camera view. Therefore, the videos used in Experiment 2 were of one true and one false confession from a Caucasian male and a female (between the ages of 18 and 24) where the view was not obstructed, as well one true and one false denial from a Caucasian male and female (between the ages of 18 and 24) where the view was not obstructed. The videotaped interrogations were edited to include the moments before the interrogator and suspect entered the room to the moment right after the interrogator left the room. The videotaped

interrogations and the majority of the questions were displayed via stimulus presentation software, SuperLab.

**Design.** Experiment 2 employed a mixed-factor design where the gender of the suspect, two guilt conditions (guilty or innocent), and two statement conditions (confessed or denied) served as three within-subjects factors. The three camera angles from which the interrogations were recorded (interrogator-focused, suspect-focused, and equal-focused) served as a between-subjects factor.

**Procedure.** Small groups of participants (no more than five) were run in each session. Participants were randomly assigned to view the videotaped interrogations from either the suspect-focused, interrogator-focused, or equal-focused camera perspective. Participants were told that they would be presented with several short videotaped interrogations and that in each case the person being interrogated was suspected of cheating on a problem-solving task in an earlier experiment. Participants electronically signed a statement of consent to participate and filled out demographic information about themselves (i.e., gender, age, race or ethnicity, and year in college).

The experiment was presented via SuperLab and consisted of eight blocks, each containing four events: instructions, video, decision, and attributions. Instructions for the interrogations where the suspect confessed stated that “in some cases the interrogation involved a guilty person who confessed to cheating and really did cheat. However, in other cases the interrogation involved an innocent person who, because of the pressure of the interrogation, confessed to cheating even though they did not really cheat.” In the videotapes where the suspect denied cheating, the instructions stated that “in some cases the interrogation involved an innocent person who did not confess to cheating and really did not cheat. However, in other

cases the interrogation involved a guilty person who feared the repercussions of cheating and did not confess even though they really did cheat.”

Immediately after watching each video participants made their judgment as to the guilt of the suspect and rated their confidence in their decision on a 10-point scale (from 0 = 0% to 10 = 100%). Finally, participants handwrote answers to two open-ended questions for each video: “What factors led you to come to your conclusion about whether the accused person cheated or not?”; “Was there anything special to note that happened during the interrogation that may have led the accused to confess to cheating or deny cheating?”

## Results

**Guilt judgments.** The data were analyzed using a 2 (Gender of the suspect)  $\times$  2 (Guilt: guilty or innocent)  $\times$  2 (Statement: confessed or denied)  $\times$  3 (Camera Perspective: interrogator-focused, suspect-focused, or equal-focused) mixed-factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) on participants’ judgments of the guilt of the suspect and their confidence in their judgment. Guilt was rated on a dichotomous scale where positive one indicated that the participant believed the suspect was guilty of cheating and negative one indicated the participant thought the suspect was innocent. Confidence was rated on a 10-point scale from 0% to 100%. In line with previous research, a scalar variable of guilt assessment was constructed by combining participants’ dichotomous judgments of guilt with the corresponding confidence ratings (Kassin & McNall, 1991). It has been suggested that this composite measure, ranging from -10 (100% confidence in innocence) to +10 (100% confidence in guilt), is a more sensitive index of guilt assessment (Kassin & Wrightsman, 1979) and it maintains ecological validity (Diamond, 1997).

Results of the mixed-factorial ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for gender of the suspect, with female suspects being judged as less innocent ( $M = -.76$ ,  $SD = 4.36$ ) than male

suspects ( $M = -2.51$ ,  $SD = 3.62$ ),  $F(1, 163) = 26.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = 42.11$ . There was also a significant main effect of guilt, with guilty suspects be judged as more guilty ( $M = .31$ ,  $SD = 4.04$ ) than innocent suspects ( $M = -3.57$ ,  $SD = 3.82$ ),  $F(1, 163) = 128.343$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = 38.72$ . Additionally, a third significant main effect for statement was found, with suspects that confessed to cheating being judged as more guilty ( $M = .16$ ,  $SD = 4.05$ ) than suspects that denied cheating ( $M = -3.57$ ,  $SD = 3.82$ ),  $F(1, 163) = 71.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = 57.20$ .

A significant two-way interaction was found between gender of the suspect and guilt,  $F(1, 163) = 49.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = 39.46$ . Simple effects tests revealed that participants were able to distinguish between guilty male suspects and innocent male suspects,  $t(163) = 13.72$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 1). Additionally, participants were rather good at distinguishing between guilty female suspects and innocent female suspects,  $t(163) = 3.16$ ,  $p = .003$ . However, the difference in guilt ratings between guilty and innocent males was greater than the difference in guilty ratings between guilty and innocent females,  $t(163) = 7.02$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Figure 1).

A second significant two-way interaction between guilt and statement was also found,  $F(1, 163) = 45.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = 33.40$ . Simple effects tests revealed that participants were able to distinguish between innocent suspects that confessed to cheating and innocent suspects that denied cheating,  $t(163) = 3.85$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, participants were only able to identify guilty suspects when they confessed to cheating,  $t(163) = 13.12$ ,  $p < .001$ . Furthermore, the difference in guilt ratings between the guilty and innocent suspects that confessed was larger than the difference between the guilty and innocent suspects that denied cheating  $t(163) = 7.00$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Figure 2).

Additionally, a significant three-way interaction was found between statement, camera perspective and gender of the suspect,  $F(2, 163) = 3.77$ ,  $p = .025$ ,  $MSE = 34.18$ . As can be seen

in Figure 3, female suspects who confessed were judged as guiltier, and female suspects that denied cheating were judged as more innocent, when the camera perspective was interrogator-focused. However, male suspects who confessed were judged as more guilty when the camera perspective was equal-focus, but male suspects that denied cheating were judged as more innocent when the camera perspective was suspect-focus. Additionally, the difference in guilt ratings between suspects who confessed to cheating and suspects that denied cheating was larger in the interrogator-focus than in the equal-focus. However, pairwise comparisons revealed that this difference was only significant for females  $F(2, 163) = 5.06, p = .002, MSE = 50.74, 95\% CI [1.57, 6.73]$ .

**Attributions of Behavior.** The two open-ended attribution questions were handwritten on a paper questionnaire separate from the SuperLab data. Unfortunately, the handwritten attribution questionnaire for 14 of the 166 participants (8.43%) was misplaced. All analyses on participants' attributions are based on the remaining 152 participants. Collapsing across the two open-ended questions of attributions of responsibility for suspects' statements, the responses were coded as containing dispositional attributions, situational attributions, both, or neither. Two independent coders, blind to the condition, coded all responses (averaged across items kappa = .42) and the primary investigator resolved any discrepancies.

A dispositional attribution score and a situational attribution score was created using a dichotomous scale where the attribution type was either present or absent. Combining responses where participants indicated that a dispositional attribution was present or both a dispositional and situational attribution was present created the dispositional attribution score. Combining responses where participants indicated that a situational attribution was present or both a dispositional and situational attribution was present created the situational attribution score. The

difference between the dispositional and situational scores were then calculated in order to evaluate the relative weight participants gave to dispositional or situational factors. For example, imagine the first participant made a dispositional attribution but not a situational attribution for the first video they watched. That participant would receive a 1 for the dispositional attribution and a 0 for the absence of a situational attribution, thus the score would be  $1 - 0 = 1$ . Now imagine that the second participant made a situational attribution but not a dispositional attribution for the first video they watched. That participant would receive a 0 for the absence of a dispositional attribution and a 1 for the situational attribution, thus the score would be  $0 - 1 = -1$ . Finally, imagine the third participant made both a dispositional and situational attribution for the first video they watched. That participant would receive a 1 for the dispositional attribution and a 1 for the situational attribution, thus the score would be  $1 - 1 = 0$ .

The data were analyzed using two 2 (Gender of the suspect)  $\times$  2 (Guilt: guilty or innocent)  $\times$  2 (Statement: confessed or denied)  $\times$  3 (Camera Perspective: interrogator-focused, suspect-focused, or equal-focused) mixed-factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the difference scores between dispositional and situational attributions. Positive difference scores indicated that dispositional attributions were more common, negative difference scores indicated that situational attributions were more common, and difference scores close to zero indicated that dispositional and situational attributions were about equally common.

Results of the mixed-factorial ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of statement where more dispositional attributions were made for suspects that denied cheating ( $M = .20$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) and both dispositional and situational attributions were made about equally for suspects that confessed to cheating ( $M = .04$ ,  $SD = .69$ ),  $F(1, 149) = 20.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = .39$ . A second significant main effect was found for condition where more dispositional attributions

were made for suspects viewed from the suspect-focused perspective ( $M = .23$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) than suspects viewed from the equal-focus perspective ( $M = .15$ ,  $SD = .70$ ), and both dispositional and situational attributions were made about equally for suspects viewed from the interrogator-focused perspective ( $M = -.02$ ,  $SD = .69$ ),  $F(2, 149) = 5.71$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $MSE = 1.20$ .

A significant two-way interaction between gender of the suspect and guilt was found,  $F(1, 149) = 25.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $MSE = .37$ . For females, the difference between dispositional and situational ratings was greater for guilty than for innocent suspects (see Table 2). However, pairwise comparisons revealed that for males the difference between dispositional and situational ratings was significantly greater for innocent suspects than for guilty suspects,  $t(151) = -2.02$ ,  $p = .045$  (see Figure 4).

A second significant two-way interaction between gender of the suspect and camera perspective,  $F(2, 149) = 4.16$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $MSE = .29$ . Participants made both dispositional & situational attributions about equally for both males and females in the interrogator-focused condition and more dispositional attributions for both males and females in the suspect-focused condition. It was also found that although participants made both dispositional & situational attributions about equally for males and females in the interrogator-focused condition and more dispositional attributions for males and females in the equal focused condition, pairwise comparisons revealed that this was only significant for females,  $F(2, 149) = 6.73$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $MSE = .19$ , 95% CI [1.57, 6.73] (see Figure 5).

Additionally, a significant three-way interaction was found between gender of the suspect, guilt, and statement,  $F(1, 149) = 6.79$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $MSE = .38$ . It was found that dispositional attributions were more common for innocent females that denied cheating and situational attributions were more common for innocent females that confessed to cheating,

$t(151) = -4.15, p < .001$ . However, for guilty females there was little difference between those that confessed to cheating and those that denied cheating (see Figure 6). Additionally, it was found that dispositional attributions were more common for guilty males that denied cheating and situational attributions were more common for guilty males that confessed to cheating,  $t(151) = -5.64, p < .001$ . However, for innocent males there was little difference between those that confessed to cheating and those that denied cheating.

## **Discussion**

Experiment 2 was designed to investigate if, and when, individuals are able to distinguish between true and false confessions, as well as between true and false denials. Additionally, Experiment 2 was conducted in order to further investigate how the angle from which a confession or denial is videotaped influences judgments of guilt as well as the type and amount of attributions made for suspects' statements. In support of Hypothesis 1, participants were unable to distinguish between suspects that were innocent and denied cheating and suspects that were guilty and denied cheating. This finding is in accordance with research showing that people are unable to distinguish between true and false confessions at rates above chance (e.g., Kassin et al., 2005; Bradford et al., 2008). In support of the second hypothesis, it was found that suspects that denied cheating were judged as more innocent and suspects that confessed to cheating were judged as more guilty, likely due to the truth bias (Levine et al., 1999). However, overall suspects were judged as innocent more often than guilty. Contrary to the third hypothesis and previous research (Lassiter and Irvine, 1986; Lassiter et al., 2003; Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation, as cited in Snyder et al., 2009), accuracy in guilt judgments was not influenced by camera perspective alone. This finding was unexpected and may be a result of where the cameras were positioned in the current study.



In support of the fourth hypothesis, participants made more dispositional than situational attributions for suspects' statements likely due to the fundamental attribution error (Taylor & Fiske, 1975). Furthermore, it was found that more dispositional attributions were made in the suspect-focused condition than in the equal-focused condition, and both dispositional and situational attributions were made about equally for suspects when the interrogator was the focus of the camera. Although this finding does not completely support the fourth hypothesis, the pattern of results is similar to the pattern of predicted results. This finding can be explained by a combination of the fundamental attribution error and illusory causation (Taylor & Fiske, 1975).

Unexpectedly, gender of the suspect was found to have an impact on guilt judgments where females were judged as less innocent than males. This finding may be due to using a limited number of videotaped interrogations, thus allowing for the possibility that judgments were based on physical individual differences between suspects. Additionally, gender was found to have an effect in several ways on participants' attributions for suspects' confessions. These findings are also likely due to the limited number of videotaped interrogations used.

### **General Discussion**

Currently 273 convictions have been overturned in the United States history due to DNA evidence, and almost 25% of those cases involved false confession evidence (Innocence Project, 2011). The idea that someone would confess to a crime they did not commit may seem unfathomable; however, both documented cases and past research proves false confessions do occur. If a defendant is taken to trial and confession evidence is admitted, the jury must decide how much weight to give the confession. Accuracy in judging the validity of a confession is extremely important because false confessions are currently considered to be one of the primary causes of wrongful convictions of innocent people (Klaver et al., 2008).

The current research was designed to be an in depth study of the effect of camera perspective on the ability of jurors to judge the reliability of confessions and denials. The purpose of Experiment 1 was to create an ecologically valid interrogation environment in order to obtain videotaped confessions and denials. The purpose of Experiment 2 was to evaluate the effect of camera perspective on participants' judgments of guilt and attributions of responsibility for the suspects' statements.

The first hypothesis tested in Experiment 1, that the proportion of suspects that confessed to cheating would be lower in general than found by previous research (e.g., Kassin & Keichel, 1996; Redlich & Goodman, 2003; Russano et al., 2005), was supported. The lower confession rate found in the current study was likely due to important differences in methodologies. One difference is that the 'alt' key paradigm has been used in much of the previous research on confessions and interrogations. Although this paradigm was revolutionary in this field of research, the high plausibility of accidentally hitting the 'alt' key on a keyboard dramatically affects confession rates. If suspects are not sure whether or not they "committed the crime" they may be more likely to assume it was possible that they did, and thus confess. Suspects in Experiment 1 were accused of cheating, a crime in which they know whether they were guilty or innocent. Therefore, suspects that were in fact innocent were more likely to deny cheating because they knew they had not committed the crime.

Another difference in methodologies that may have contributed to the lower confession rates in the current study was the motivation for confessing. For example, in Lassiter et al. (manuscript in preparation, as cited in Snyder et al., 2009) half of the participants were urged to cover for the confederate that had cheated, so the motivation for some to confess was to cover for another person, not to cover for himself. In true interrogations most people do not confess unless

there is some sort of personal benefit (e.g., leniency or arousal reduction). Although voluntary false confessions do occur they are rare (Kassin, 1997). Experiment 1 was more in line with real life interrogations, where the suspect initially denies the accusation and only confesses after pressure is applied from the interrogator.

It is also possible that the lower confession rate found in Experiment 1, compared to previous research, was due to the consequences of confessing. Confessing to a crime in the real world can have serious repercussions, such as jail time or financial restitution. In the current study, and in some previous research such as Russano et al. (2005), a consequence for committing the crime (i.e., cheating) was made explicit. Suspects were told that the interrogator had informed their professor about situation and that the professor may consider the situation a case of cheating. The consequence for being caught cheating became very salient for suspects when it was explained that cheating would constitute academic dishonesty and could result in disciplinary action by the department and/or the University. Therefore, it is highly likely that fewer suspects confessed to the crime because they were aware of the negative consequences for doing so.

Furthermore, in Experiment 1 less than half of suspects cheated, whereas almost all participants cheated in a similar study (Russano et al., 2005). The dramatic difference in the proportion of guilty suspects between the current study and Russano et al. is possibly due to the current researcher using both male confederates and male interrogators as opposed to all female confederates and all male interrogators. There is a stereotype that men should protect women, therefore using male confederates instead of female confederates may have reduced the number of males that cheated because they felt less obligated to do so (Eagly & Crowley, 1986).

False confession evidence used in the legal system partly depends on how the judge and jury interpret it. If confession evidence is submitted for trial in the form of a videotape it seems as though the judge and jury would be able to make more thorough and accurate decisions about the validity of the confession (Lassiter et al., 2001). However, the angle from which the confession is recorded may have an impact on how the defendant is perceived.

Experiment 2 was conducted in order to investigate what, if any, effects camera perspective has on judgments of guilt and attributions of responsibility for confessing to or denying committing a crime. In support of the first hypothesis tested in Experiment 2, it was found that participants were unable to distinguish between suspects who were innocent and denied cheating and suspects who were guilty and denied cheating. When suspects denied cheating participants judged them as innocent even when the suspect falsely denied cheating. This inability to distinguish between true and false denials is in accordance with previous research demonstrating that, for the most part; people are only able to distinguish between true and false confessions at chance levels (e.g., Kassin et al., 2005; Bradford et al., 2008). If participants judge the denials as generally valid, regardless of validity, we may learn if and when people are able to identify one's deception. By analyzing when and why participants believe a denial is valid we may be able to train law enforcement personnel how to spot innocent and guilty suspects. Therefore, it may be possible to reduce the number of coerced confession, as well as learn when to continue investigating a suspect.

In support of the second hypothesis tested in Experiment 2, it was found that suspects who denied cheating were judged as more innocent and suspects who confessed to cheating were judged as more guilty. The tendency for participants to believe suspects' statements is in line with previous research on the truth bias (Levine et al., 1999). Because participants encounter

more truthful messages on a regular basis, they are more likely to believe the suspects' statements are true (O'Sullivan et al., 1988). It is also possible that this tendency is simply due to participants' desire to use as little cognitive resources as possible. By taking the suspects' statements at face value, participants do not have to devote much cognitive resources to the task. Previous research has found that incoming information is originally encoded as truthful, and for information to be considered false it must be re-examined (Gilbert et al., 1990). Due to the difficulty of re-analyzing this information, it is possible that participants made errors, leaving them to fail to account for false confessions and false denials.

However, overall suspects were judged as innocent more often than guilty. It is possible that participants assumed most suspects were innocent because of the nature of the crime they were accused of committing. In other words, because participants had likely participated in other experiments in the psychology department for course credit they may have thought most undergraduate students would see no reason or benefit to cheat in a research experiment. It may have also been the case that participants did not view sharing answers with the confederate as cheating. In other words, even if participants thought the suspects may have shared answers on the individual portions of the problem-solving task, they were hesitant to label suspects as guilty of cheating.

The results of Experiment 2 did not support the third hypothesis being tested, that accuracy in judgments of guilt would be greatest when the camera was focused on the interrogator (interrogator-focused condition) than when the camera was focused on a profile view of both the suspect and the interrogator (equal-focused) followed by when the camera was focused on the suspect (suspect-focused). The finding that camera perspective did not affect accuracy in judgments of guilt likely reflects the fact that although participants were able to

accurately distinguish between innocent suspects that both confessed to and denied cheating, they were only able to accurately identify guilty suspects that confessed to cheating. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this accuracy rates would not vary across camera perspectives.

The lack of camera perspective bias in the current study is in contrast to previous research where accuracy has been found to be the greatest in the interrogator-focused condition, followed by the equal-focused condition, then the suspect-focused condition (Lassiter et al., 2003; Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation, as cited in Snyder et al., 2009). This discrepancy in results may be due to differences in the quality of the videos themselves. In previous research (e.g., Snyder et al., 2009; Ware, Lassiter; Patterson, & Ransom, 2008) the quality of the videotaped interrogations was rather good. In the current study, there were limited places to hide the video cameras so they had to be hidden in places (e.g., an artificial flower pot) that made it difficult to get a good close up, head on shot, of the suspect and the interrogator (in the suspect-focused and interrogator-focused conditions respectively) and a close up profile shot that included both the suspect and the interrogator equally in the equal-focused condition. It is possible that the camera perspective bias would be found if this study was replicated using a more optimal location with better quality video cameras.

In support of the fourth hypothesis tested in Experiment 2, participants made more dispositional than situational attributions for suspects' statements. This finding is likely due to the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977, Gilbert et al., 1990; Jones and Harris, 1967). In other words, participants underestimated the situational factors and overestimated the dispositional factors that may have led suspects to confess to or deny cheating. It was also found that more dispositional attributions were made for suspects viewed when they were the focus of the camera than when the suspect and the participant were both the focus of the camera, and both

dispositional and situational attributions were made about equally for suspects when the interrogator was the focus of the camera. These findings can be explained by the phenomenon of illusory causation (Taylor & Fiske).

Several unexpected results were found regarding the gender of the suspect and guilt judgments. One interesting finding was that the gender of the suspect was found to influence guilt judgments such that females were judged to be less innocent than male suspects overall. Furthermore, when the camera was focused on female suspects they were judged as more guilty when they confessed to cheating and more innocent when they denied cheating. However, when male suspects confessed to cheating they were judged as more guilty when the camera focus was on both the suspect and the interrogator, but when they denied cheating they were judged as more innocent when the camera was focused on the suspect.

The gender of the suspect may have influenced judgments of guilt because a limited number of videotaped interrogations were shown to participants. Having only four videos of females and four videos of males leaves open the possibility that there were physical individual differences between the suspects that influenced guilt judgments. Because female suspects' statements were judged as the most valid when the female suspect could not be seen by the participant and male suspects' statements were judged as the most valid when the male suspect could be seen by the participant, it is possible that participants were picking up on some physical individual differences that made them find the male suspects more trustworthy than the female suspects. Although this explanation is only speculative, the current findings cannot be compared to previous research conducted by Russano et al. (2005) and Lassiter et al., manuscript in preparation (as cited in Snyder et al., 2009) because all of their videotaped confessions were of

males. It is important to replicate the current studies using a larger number of videotaped interrogations.

Three unexpected results were found that demonstrated that the gender of the suspects had an effect on the type and amount of attributions participants made for the suspects' statements. First, it was found that participants made more dispositional attributions for guilty females than for innocent females, however, the pattern for males was the exact opposite. Second, it was found that for both male and female suspects participants made both dispositional and situational attributions about equally when the camera was focused on the interrogator. For both male and female suspects it was also found that participants made more dispositional attributions when the camera was focused on the suspect, a finding that is in accordance with the fundamental attribution error and illusory causation (Taylor & Fiske, 1975). However, these findings were only significant for females. Third, dispositional attributions were found to be more common for innocent females that denied cheating and situational attributions were more common for innocent females that confessed to cheating. Additionally, there was not much difference between dispositional and situational attributions for guilty females that confessed to cheating and those that denied cheating. However, this pattern was the exact opposite for males. In other words, dispositional attributions were more common for males that falsely denied cheating and for females that truly denied cheating, and situational attributions were more common for males that truly confessed to cheating and for females that falsely confessed to cheating.

It is unclear at this time as to why gender was such an influential factor in the type and amount of attributions participants made for suspects' statements. It is probably too early to speculate as to the reasons behind these findings, however, it is possible that the difference in



patterns between male and female suspects was due to the limited number of videotaped interrogations, which allowed suspects' individual differences to become a factor, as well. It is reasonable to assume that individual differences between suspects would have a large impact on the type and amount of dispositional attributions participants made about the suspects.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

As with all research, the current studies are not without limitations. One limitation to consider when evaluating the confession and denial rates in Experiment 1 is the fact that most undergraduate students would not experience the same consequences for confessing to a crime in a laboratory study as a suspect would in real life. However, an attempt was made in Experiment 1 to make some form of consequence explicit that would seem relatively large to an undergraduate student, namely committing academic dishonesty and facing departmental or university repercussions.

It is also important to note that the interrogators used in Experiment 1 were not police interrogators or trained actors. While every attempt was made to keep the script during the interrogation in Experiment 1 identical across participants, it was not always feasible for the interrogators to do so. Additionally, there may be things about the interrogators themselves, such as participants' perceptions of the interrogators authority, warmth, compassion, friendliness, and so forth that contributed to the confession and denial rates found in Experiment 1, as well as to how participants viewed suspects' statements in Experiment 2.

Finally, it should be noted that although the quality of the picture and sound were not ideal, the videos chosen for Experiment 2 included all aspects of the scene required, depending on condition, and both the suspect and interrogator could be clearly understood. The placement

of the hidden cameras was largely determined by the constraints of the researcher's laboratory space, and in some cases there were minor obstructions blocking the full view of the camera.

Because of these limitations, it is important to further conduct studies on confessions and interrogations both inside and outside the laboratory to better generalize these results to the court system. Although, it has been well documented that it is possible to obtain a false confession in a laboratory setting, it is still unknown exactly how these findings would apply to actual jurors' decisions about the validity of a confession.

Future research in this area might include actual jurors. One possible way to do this would be to recruit adult participants that recently served jury duty on a case involving a confession. Although not a precise measure by any means, simply asking jurors about their impressions of the confession, and whether they believed the defendant was guilty, may yield interesting and more ecologically valid findings.

Additionally, future research could expand current knowledge on confessions and interrogations by including denials. By comparing how individuals judge people that confess to a crime with individuals that deny committing a crime, it may be possible to identify the key factors that individuals are using to make guilt judgments. For example, in the Experiment 2 it was found that simply confessing to a crime increased guilt ratings. It would be possible to conduct a follow-up analysis of the responses participants gave in Experiment 2 as to the factors that led them to their conclusion about the guilt of the suspects and anything special that happened during the interrogation that may have led the suspect to confess to or deny cheating. It is possible that by analyzing the content of these responses we would uncover common themes amongst participants. Furthermore, conducting this analysis on the responses for participants

that judged guilty suspects that denied cheated as innocent, may give some insight into how suspects deceive interrogators and jurors in general.

## **Conclusion**

Due to the increase in felony exonerations based on DNA evidence, where a false confession was obtained, research on the reasons why people falsely confess is of great importance. Individual differences interact with the social context of the interrogation, and in some cases result in a person confessing to a crime they did not commit. The way in which a confession is presented to the judge and jury likely has an influence on how the confession is viewed.

It is important for the criminal justice system, as well as the layperson, to know and understand why it is possible for a person to falsely confess. The current research was conducted in order to determine when and why people confess to or deny committing crimes they are accused of, as well as to investigate the effects of camera perspective on ecologically valid videotaped confessions and denials. The current findings further demonstrate that some proportion of people confess to crimes they did not commit, however, the camera perspective bias was not evident. Future research needs to be conducted in order to generalize the current findings to true confessions and interrogations. With enough research conducted on the matter it may be possible to reduce, if not eliminate, false confessions and false imprisonment based on those confessions.

## References

- Bierbrauer, G. *Effect of set, perspective, and temporal factors in attribution*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1973.
- Bradford, D., & Goodman-Delahunty, J. (2008). Detecting deception in police investigations: implications for false confessions. *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law*, 15, 105-118.
- Diamond, S. S. (1997). Illuminations and shadows from jury simulations. *Law and Human Behavior*, 21, 561-571.
- Drizin, S.A., & Leo, R.A. (2004). The problem of false confessions in the post-DNA world. *North Carolina Law Review*, 82, 891-1107.
- Eagly, A. H., & Crowley, M. (1986). Gender and helping behavior: A meta-analytic review of the social psychology literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, 100, 283-308.
- Forrest, K. D., Wadkins, T. A., & Larson, B. A. (2006). Suspect personality, police interrogations, and false confessions: Maybe it is not just the situation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 40, 621-628.
- Geller, W.A. (1993). Police videotaping of suspect interrogations and confessions: A preliminary examination of issues and practices. *National Institute of Justice*.
- Gilbert, D.T., Krull, D.S., & Malone, P.S. (1990). Unbelieving the unbelievable: Some problems in the rejection of false information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 601-613.
- Gudjonsson, G.H. (1993). Confession evidence, psychological vulnerability and expert testimony. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 3, 117-129.
- Gudjonsson, G.H. (2003). *The Psychology of Interrogations and Confessions: A Handbook*, Wiley, Chichester.
- Horselenberg, R., Merckelbach, H., & Josephs, S. (2003). Individual differences and false confessions: A conceptual replication of Kassin and Kiechel (1996). *Psychology, Crime, and Law*, 9, 1-8.
- Inbau, F.E., Reid, J.E., Buckley, J.P., & Jayne, B.C. (2001). *Criminal interrogation and confessions* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen.
- Innocence Project (2011). Understand the causes. Retrieved June 29, 2011, <http://www.innocenceproject.org>
- Jackson v. Denno, 378 U.S. 368 (1964)

- Jones, E. E. & Harris, V. A. (1967). The attribution of attitudes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 3, 1-24.
- Kassin, S.M. (1997). False memories turned against the self. *Psychological Inquiry*, 8, 300-302.
- Kassin, S.M. (2008). Confession evidence: Commonsense myths and misconceptions. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35, 1309-1322.
- Kassin, S. M., Drizin, S. A., Grisso, T., Gudjonsson, G. H., Leo, R. A., & Redlich, A. D. (2010). Police-induced confessions: Risk factors and recommendations. *Law and Human Behavior*, 34, 3-38.
- Kassin, S.M. & Kiechel, K.L. (1996). The social psychology of false confessions: Compliance, internalization and confabulations, *Psychological Science*, 7, 125-128.
- Kassin, S.M. & McNall, K. (1991). Police interrogations and confessions, *Law and Human Behavior*, 15, 233-251.
- Kassin, S.M., Meissner, C.A., & Norwick, R.J. (2005). "I'd know a false confession if I saw one": A comparative study of college students and police investigators. *Law and Human Behavior*, 29, 211-227.
- Kassin, S. M., & Neumann, K. (1997). On the power of confession evidence: an experimental test of the fundamental difference hypothesis. *Law and Human Behavior*, 21, 469 -484.
- Kassin, S.M., & Sukel, H. (1997). Coerced confessions and the jury: An experimental test of the 'harmless error' rule. *Law and Human Behavior*, 21, 27-46.
- Kassin, S.M. & Wrightsman, L.S. (1979). On the requirements of proof: The timing of judicial instruction and mock juror verdicts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1877-1887.
- Kassin, S.M. & Wrightsman, L.S. (1980). Prior confessions and mock juror verdicts. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 10, 133-146.
- Klaver, J.R, Lee, Z., Rose, V.G. (2008). Effects of personality, interrogation techniques and plausibility in an experimental false confession paradigm. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 13, 71-88.
- Koffka, K. (1935). *Principles of gestalt psychology*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Kopelman, M. D. (1999). Varieties of false memory. *Cognitive Neuropsychology*, 16, 3-5,
- Lassiter, G. D. (2002). Illusory causation in the courtroom. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11, 204-208.

- Lassiter, G. D., Beers, M. J., Geers, A. L., Handley, I. M., Munhall, P. J., & Weiland, P. E. (2002). Further evidence of a robust point-of-view bias in videotaped confessions. *Current Psychology*, 21, 265– 288.
- Lassiter, G. D., Beers, M. J., Geers, A. L., & Munhall, P. J. (2003). [Which camera perspective leads to more accurate evaluations of videotaped confessions?] Unpublished raw data.
- Lassiter, G. D.; Diamond, S.; Schmidt, H.; Elek, J. (2007). Evaluating videotaped confessions: Expertise provides no defense against the camera-perspective effect. *Psychological Science*, 18, 224-226.
- Lassiter, G. D. & Irvine, A. A. (1986). Videotaped confessions: The impact of camera point on view of judgments of coercion. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 16, 268-276.
- Lassiter, G.D., Munhall, P.J., Berger, I.P., Weiland, P.E., Handley, I.M., Geers, A.L. (2005). Attributional complexity and the camera perspective bias in videotaped confessions. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 27, 27-35.
- Lassiter, G.D., Munhall, P.J., Weiland, P.E., Handley, I.M., Geers, A.L. (2001). Accountability and the camera perspective bias in videotaped confessions. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 53–70
- Leo, R.A. & Ofshe, R.J. (1998). The consequences of false confessions: Deprivations of liberty and miscarriages of justice in the age of psychological interrogation. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*.
- Leung, R. (2009, February 11). The confession. *CBS News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com>
- Levine, T.R., Park, H.S, & McCornack, S.A. (1999). Accuracy in detecting truths and lies: Documenting the ‘veracity effect.’ *Communication Monographs*, 66, 125-144.
- McArthur, L.Z. & Ginsberg, E. (1981). Causal attribution to salient stimuli: An investigation of visual fixation mediators. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 7, 547-553.
- McCornack, S.A. (1997). The generation of deceptive messages: Laying the groundwork for a viable theory of interpersonal deception. In J.O. Greene (Ed.). *Messages Production*. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67, 371-378.
- Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436 (1966)
- Ofshe, R.J. (1989). Coerced confessions: The logic of seemingly irrational action. *Cultic Studies Journal*, 6, 1-15

- O'Sullivan, M., Ekman, P., & Friesen, W.V. (1988). The effect of comparisons on detecting deceit. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 12, 203-215.
- Redlich, A. D., & Goodman, G. S. (2003). Taking responsibility for an act not committed: The influence of age and suggestibility. *Law and Human Behavior*, 27, 141-156.
- Ross, L. The intuitive psychologist and his shortcomings: Distortions in the attribution process. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 10). New York: Academic Press, 1977.
- Ross, L., Amabile, T.M., & Steinmetz, J.L. (1977). Social roles, social control, and biases in social-perception processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 485-494.
- Russano, M.B., Meissner, C.A., Narchet, F.M., & Kassin, S.M. (2005). Investigating true and false confessions within a novel experimental paradigm. *Psychological Science*, 16, 481-486.
- Schacter, D. L., Gilbert, D. T., & Wegner, D. M. (2009). *Psychology*. New York: Worth, 2009.
- Snodgrass, J. G., & Corwin, J. (1988). Pragmatics of measuring recognition memory: Applications to dementia and amnesia. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 117, 34-50.
- Snyder, J., Lassiter, G., Lindberg, M., & Pinegar, S. (2009). Videotaped interrogations and confessions: Does dual-camera approach yield unbiased and accurate evaluations? *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 27, 451-466.
- Storms, M. D. (1973). Videotape and the attribution process: Reversing actors' and observers' points of view. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 27, 165-175.
- Taylor, S. E. & Fiske, S. T. (1975). Point of view and perceptions of causality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 32, 439-445.
- Vrij, A. (2000). *Detecting lies and deceit: The psychology of lying and implications for professional practice*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ware, L. J., Lassiter, D., Patterson, M., & Ransom, M. R. (2008). Camera perspective bias in videotaped confessions: Evidence that visual attention is a mediator. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 14, 192-200.
- Wicklund, R. A. & Duval, S. (1971). Opinion change and performance facilitation as a result of object self-awareness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 7, 319-342.

Table 1

*Overall Means and Standard Deviations for Judgments of Guilt x Confidence.*

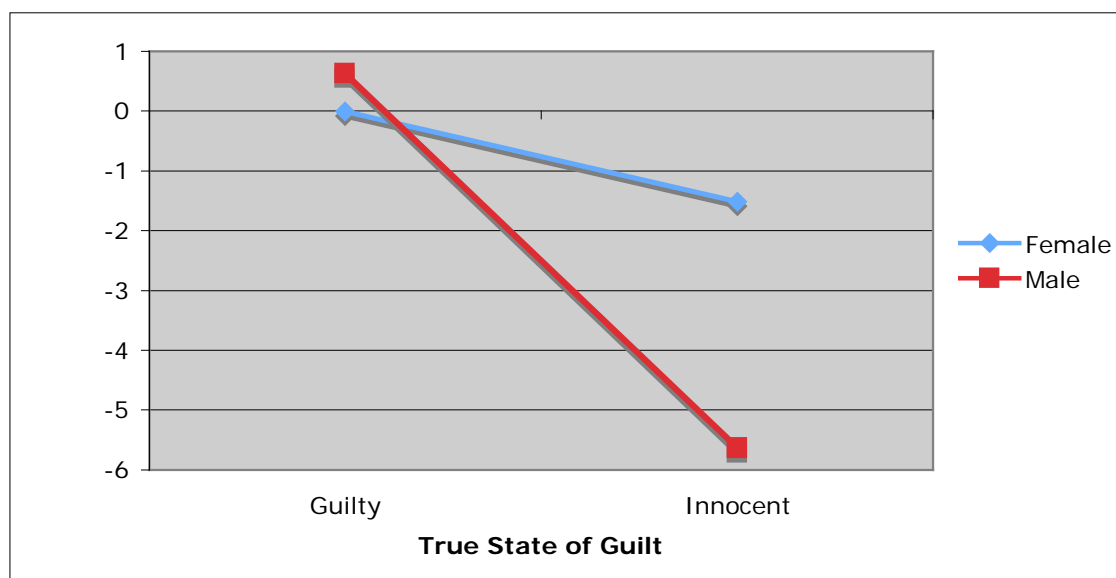
	Suspect ( <i>n</i> = 47)	Interrogator ( <i>n</i> = 60)	Equal ( <i>n</i> = 59)
Confession			
Female			
Guilty	2.68 (7.54)	3.23 (6.91)	2.97 (7.45)
Innocent	-.06 (7.44)	.60 (7.59)	-3.07 (6.93)
Male			
Guilty	2.94 (6.58)	3.48 (6.53)	3.53 (6.98)
Innocent	-6.17 (4.92)	-5.05 (5.72)	-3.75 (6.71)
Denial			
Female			
Guilty	-2.77 (7.17)	-3.70 (6.52)	-2.49 (7.47)
Innocent	-1.57 (7.60)	-3.90 (6.97)	-.75 (7.48)
Male			
Guilty	-2.43 (7.27)	-2.33 (6.47)	-1.58 (7.44)
Innocent	-8.04 (3.51)	-6.02 (5.45)	-5.41 (6.72)



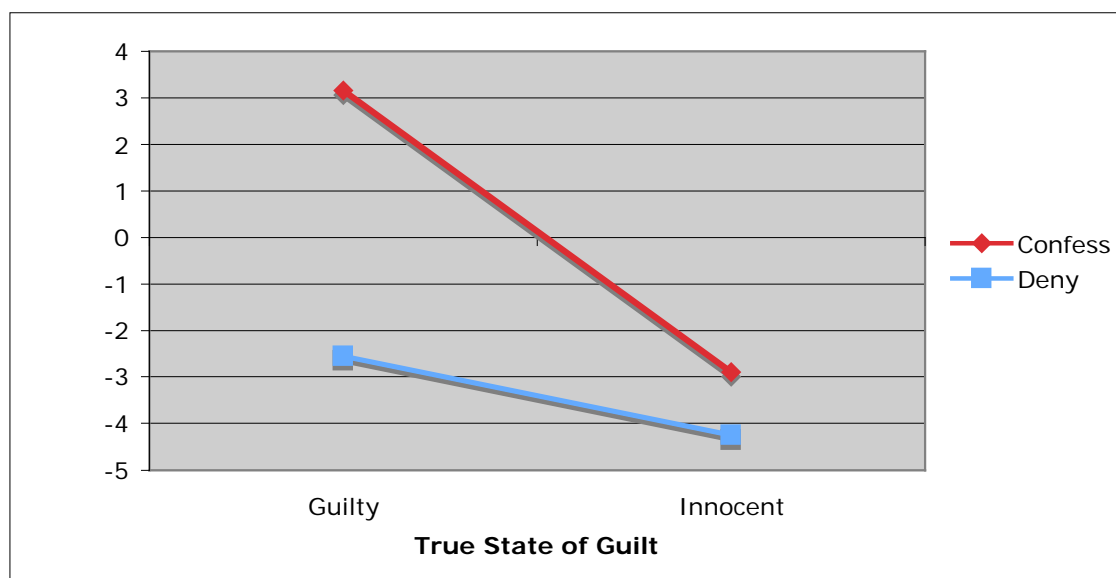
Table 2

*Overall Means and Standard Deviations for the Differences Between Dispositional and Situational Attributions*

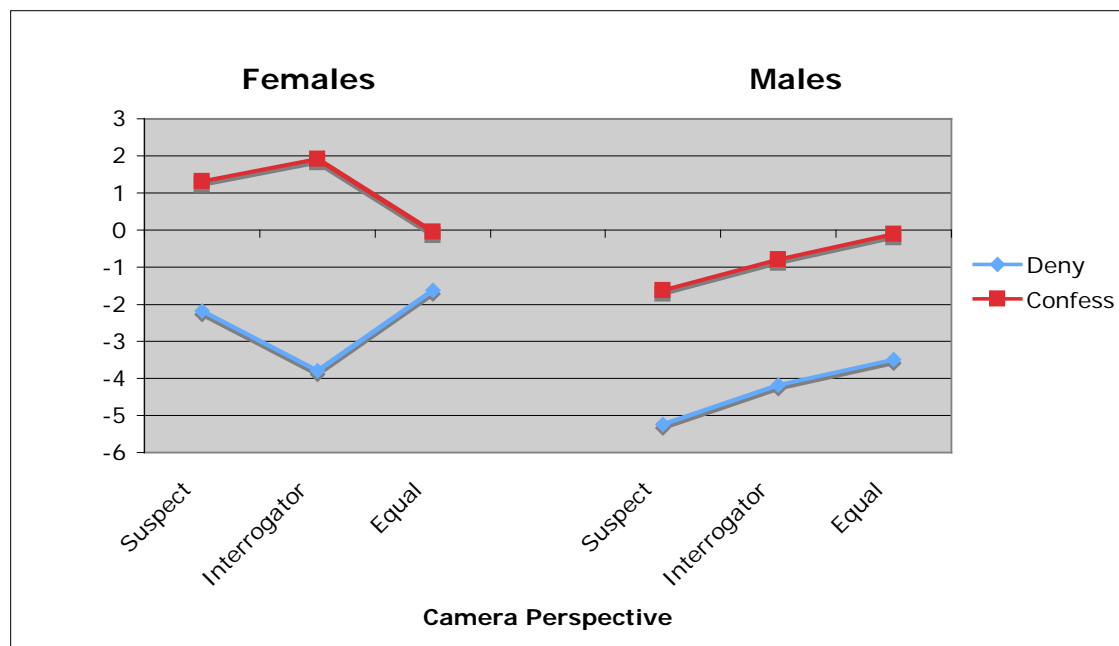
	Suspect (n= 47)	Interrogator (n= 57)	Equal (n= 48)
Confession			
Female			
Guilty	.26 (.61)	.05 (.61)	.21 (.71)
Innocent	.15 (.69)	-.39 (.68)	.04 (.65)
Male			
Guilty	.04 (.59)	-.23 (.69)	-.17 (.81)
Innocent	.28 (.65)	.16 (.77)	.12 (.70)
Denial			
Female			
Guilty	.26 (.74)	-.07 (.70)	.31 (.66)
Innocent	.19 (.71)	.19 (.72)	.31 (.72)
Male			
Guilty	.40 (.68)	.07 (.68)	.31 (.69)
Innocent	.30 (.69)	.09 (.71)	.08 (.65)



*Figure 1.* Mean judgments of guilt  $\times$  confidence as a function of guilt and gender of the suspect. Positive values indicate guilt judgments and negative values indicate innocence judgments. Larger absolute values indicate higher confidence.



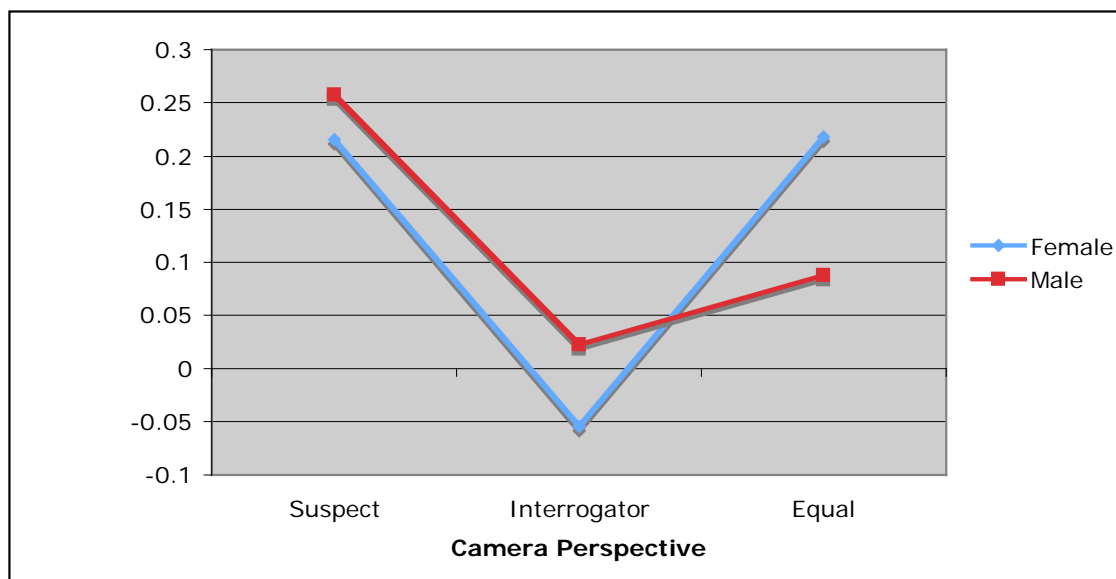
*Figure 2.* Mean judgments of guilt  $\times$  confidence as a function of guilt and statement. Positive values indicate guilt judgments and negative values indicate innocence judgments. Larger absolute values indicate higher confidence.



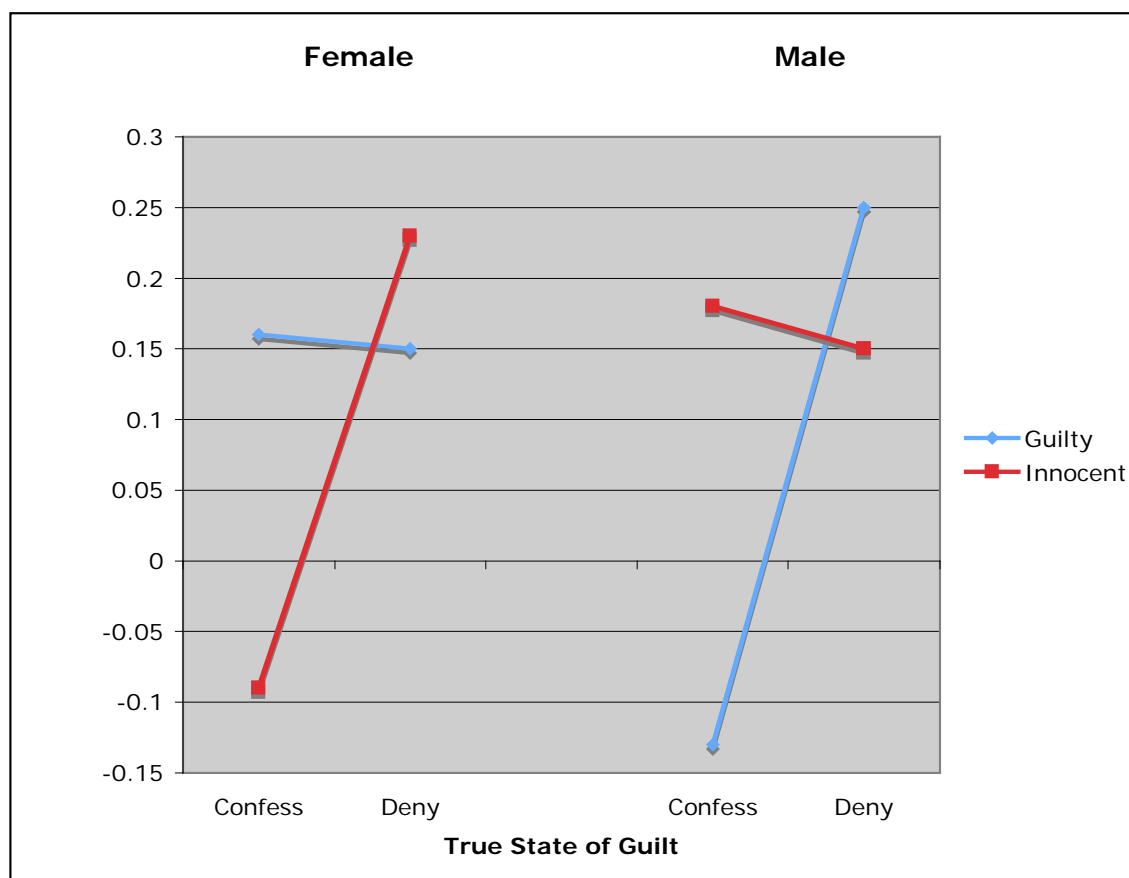
*Figure 3.* Mean judgments of guilt  $\times$  confidence as a function of statement, camera perspective, and gender of the suspect. Positive values indicate guilt judgments and negative values indicate innocence judgments. Larger absolute values indicate higher confidence.



*Figure 4.* Differences between dispositional and situational attributions as a function of gender of the suspect and guilt. Positive values indicate dispositional attributions were more common, negative values indicate that situational attributions were more common, and values close to zero indicate that dispositional and situational attributions were equally common.



*Figure 5.* Differences between dispositional and situational attributions as a function of gender of the suspect and camera perspective. Positive values indicate dispositional attributions were more common, negative values indicate that situational attributions were more common, and values close to zero indicate that dispositional and situational attributions were equally common.



*Figure 6.* Differences between dispositional and situational attributions as a function of gender of the suspect, guilt, and camera perspective. Positive values indicate dispositional attributions were more common, negative values indicate that situational attributions were more common, and values close to zero indicate that dispositional and situational attributions were equally common.

## Appendix A

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My name: \_\_\_\_\_ My partner's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in your name and your partner's name, as well as today's date at the top of the page. For some problems you are to work alone, for others you are to work together on your answers. Whether you are to work independently or with your partner is indicated after the letter you are given to use for the problem (e.g., LETTER P- PLEASE WORK INDEPENDENT). For the **independent problems PLEASE DO NOT CONSULT EACH OTHER** during these problems.

Use the given letter to answer each of the following. They have to be real places, names, things.... nothing made up! You CAN'T use your name for the boy/girl name question.

**LETTER: A- PLEASE WORK TOGETHER**

4 LETTER WORD: \_\_\_\_\_

BOYS NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

GIRLS NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING YOU WEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

FOOD: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING FOUND IN A BATHROOM: \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE: \_\_\_\_\_

REASON FOR BEING LATE: \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE ITEM: \_\_\_\_\_

TOOL: \_\_\_\_\_



**LETTER: W - PLEASE WORK INDEPENDENTLY (Do NOT consult each other)**

SOMETHING YOU SHOUT: \_\_\_\_\_

GAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING FOUND IN A BACKYARD: \_\_\_\_\_

VACATION PLACE: \_\_\_\_\_

WEDDING GIFT: \_\_\_\_\_

VEHICLE: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

CARTOON CHARACTER: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING YOU WEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

CELEBRITY: \_\_\_\_\_

BEVERAGE: \_\_\_\_\_

**LETTER: S- PLEASE WORK TOGETHER**

ANIMAL: \_\_\_\_\_

T.V. SHOW: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING YOU FIND ON A FARM: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTRY: \_\_\_\_\_

SONG WITH A PERSON'S NAME IN THE TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DOG BREED: \_\_\_\_\_

FRUIT: \_\_\_\_\_

BAND WITH A ONE WORD NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING ASSOCIATED WITH AMERICA: \_\_\_\_\_

MYTHICAL CREATURE/MONSTER: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTOR/ACTRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU ITCH: \_\_\_\_\_

**LETTER: P- PLEASE WORK INDEPENDENTLY (Do NOT consult each other)**

MATH TERM: \_\_\_\_\_

COLD DRINK: \_\_\_\_\_

BOOK AUTHOR: \_\_\_\_\_

PHOTOGRAPHY TERM OR EQUIPMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

SPORT: \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF FURNITURE: \_\_\_\_\_

KITCHEN APPLIANCE: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING TERRIFYING: \_\_\_\_\_

MEDICAL TERM/MEDICINE: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING THAT SMELLS BAD: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING PEOPLE PAY A LOT FOR: \_\_\_\_\_

CAR PART: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!